

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 1 through 26 are pending, with Claims 1 and 16 being independent. Claims 1 through 17, 20, 22, and 24 through 26 have been amended.

The Official Action required that Figs. 15A through 15C be labeled as --PRIOR ART--. In response, Applicants have attached hereto a Replacement Sheet comprising said figures having been so labeled. Favorable consideration is earnestly solicited.

Claims 16 through 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite, and Claim 1 was objected to as unclear. All rejections and objections are respectfully traversed, and is submitted to have been obviated by the amendment of the claims in a manner respectfully submitted to avoid the grounds of rejection and objection.

Claims 1 through 26 were variously rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 over U.S. Patent No. 4,994,843 (Kitazawa), taken alone or in view of U.S. Patent Nos. 5,895,130 (Saito, et al.) and/or 5,684,627 (Ganser, et al.) or Official Notice. Claims 1 through 26 were also variously rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Figs. 15A through 15C of the subject specification in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,365,302 (Kodama), or various combinations of Kodama, Saito, et al., Ganser, et al., and U.S. Patent Nos. 5,235,428 (Hirota, et al.) and 5,392,088 (Abe, et al.). All rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 16 variously recite, inter alia, (a) grouping the divided areas (the image having been divided) into object areas, and determining a main object area out of the object areas, in combination with (b) changing the main object area to another object area and changing to focus on the changed main object area.

However, Applicants respectfully submit that none of Kitazawa, Saito, et al., Ganser, et al., Official Notice, Figs. 15A through 15C, Kodama, Hirota, et al., and Abe, et al., even in the proposed combinations, assuming, arguendo, that such could be combined, discloses or suggests at least the above-discussed combination of claimed features as recited, inter alia, in Claims 1 and 16. Further in this regard, Applicant respectfully submits that Kitazawa shows, e.g., measuring areas 20a, 20b, and 20c, which constitute neither a description nor a suggestion of the above-discussed claimed features including the grouped divided areas, and that Saito, et al. is likewise deficient. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that Figs. 15A through 15C are silent as to the above-discussed feature (b). The Official Action relies upon col. 1, lines 24-34 of Kodama, which refers to, e.g., “setting the focus area at the desired location”; however, Applicants respectfully submit that such citation constitutes neither a description nor suggestion of said feature since the “focus area” of Kodama is not a main object area or changed main object area as claimed. Furthermore, the Official Notice is respectfully traversed in the absence of a cited reference, which reference Applicants respectfully request be provided for their review. MPEP 2144.03. It is further respectfully submitted that there has been no showing of any indication of motivation in the cited documents that would lead one having ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the above-discussed claimed features. By means of such features, Applicants respectfully submit that, e.g., a main object area may be located at any position in the image, and thus, degree of freedom of focus control as well as operability of the device are greatly improved.

The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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